

# Greener Staplehurst Group Meeting – 19 April 2021 (Zoom)

## Present:

David George (Chair)  
Jose Castro  
Mina McPhee  
Martin Ralph  
Paddy Riordan  
Adele Sharp  
Richard Smith  
Vince Fordham

## 1. Apologies

Louise Pettifer  
Jacqui Veitch  
David Charge  
Peter Spearink  
Natasha Thomas

## 2. Minutes of last meeting

Approved.

## 3. Greener Staplehurst Group Remit and Terms of Reference

In advance of this meeting the GSG 'Terms of Reference' document was circulated. This was partly for the benefit of new members and also for a general review.

There was a discussion about the purpose of the group; the point was made that GSG is a sub group of the Parish Council. As such, all decisions must be approved by the full council. All group members are reminded that any opinions expressed publicly representing GSG must adhere to the Council policies. Since its inception GSG has accomplished much good in the village and this goodwill must not be risked by airing personally held political views.

This gentle reminder comes following a discussion thread on WhatsApp which was veering towards personally held political views. The clarification was made that the GSG WhatsApp group is a private forum for group members to discuss openly ideas and suggestions while the GSG Facebook page serves a different purpose:

- To disseminate information about the group in order to raise awareness of the group's work.
- To help engage and persuade Staplehurst residents to change behaviour towards more environmentally friendly activity.

Anyone posting on Facebook, either as GSG or village Facebook page participant must ensure that no political views are expressed, nor any controversy invited.

All members of the group are invited to review the 'Terms of Reference' document. Overall the document is considered to serve its purpose although MM indicated that it needed to include some wording related to carbon reduction activities. The following wording is suggested for comment:

'To help reduce the local area carbon footprint by undertaking activities that will reduce carbon and to promote carbon reduction outlook amongst local residents.'

#### 4. Herb bed report

The herb bed has established nicely. It was agreed that a sign is needed to indicate that this herb bed is a community project and villagers are welcome to plant and as well as take herbs for personal use. **Action: DG has kindly undertaken to get the sign made.**

#### 5. Litter Update

The Parish Council has now approved the Litter Strategy document created by RS who will now create a more detailed action plan working with DG and Joan. DG has passed responsibility for village litter programme to RS.

**Action: RS to finalise and report fully on the action plan at the next meeting.**

#### 6. Planters update

All the planters need attention: weeding, forking and watering. DG has recently been unwell and therefore unable to keep up. There was a discussion about the best way of keeping the planters and beds maintained. Community involvement and the Payback Team were suggested although Covid-19 still restricts group activity for a few more weeks.

**Action: DG and VF to discuss and take forward.**

#### 7. Tree planting

DG reported on his meeting with MBC Parks Officer, Andy Jessam, who was formerly head gardener with National Trust. His recommendation for Staplehurst is that since we have now missed the planting season we should not spend money on trees but wait until the autumn and then plant saplings. He suggests that the best way to protect the newly planted saplings from getting mowed is to dig an overlarge hole and then surround the newly planted tree with a wide ring of mulch. This should provide a good visual sign to the mowers.

**Action: DG and PR will meet with Andy Jessam again once Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted in order to tour the village to discuss tree species and locations for plantings.**

MR reminded the group that we have 300 saplings that he is nurturing in his garden and which need planting around the village. He has suggested that the scouts could do the planting. It was suggested that the ('mini forest' – Miyawaki forest) concept of planting should be considered as it has a high positive impact on wildlife biodiversity. It was proposed that the Village Golf Club would be a good location for the trees with the added benefit that the groundsman there could keep an eye on them.

**Action: PR and MR to take forward.**

## **8. Astro turf lobbying**

Following a suggestion that the Group should lobby planning authorities to get astro turfing subject to planning permission, there was a discussion about whether the Group should get involved. Various views were put forward including the views that this was micro-managing the lives of individuals, the difficulty of policing such activities and whether lobbying is part of the group's remit. It was agreed that the group wants to use its limited resources on activities that have greater return in a shorter space of time and at present this kind of lobbying is not to be pursued.

## **9. Operative volunteers**

Now that Covid-19 restrictions are beginning to relax we can start to consider how to engage more villagers in taking active part in the Group's activities around the village. The suggestion was considered that people should be invited to form groups to be responsible for particular areas (eg. Wimpey Field volunteers). However, after discussion it was felt that, initially, shorter term commitment would be easier to come by. It is proposed that a date be agreed when the Payback team, councillors and volunteers can undertake a day of GSG activity around the village.

**Action: Table as agenda item for next meeting so a date can be agreed.**

## **10. Budget**

The GSG budget currently contains money from various donations received last year as well as £1,000 from the Parish Council. Of this £200 has been set aside for the litter campaign.

Since DG is often required to go shopping for plants, seed and other items, it was agreed that £500 should be put aside for him to draw down for appropriate expenses, without the need to gain individual approval for every expense. DG will, of course, provide a full accounting of all purchases.

## **11. Any other business**

**Attendance at GSG meetings** – all members of the group were thanked for taking the time to be involved in the Group which is undertaking valuable work around the village (and the work is being noticed by residents!). Attendance at meetings is an important part of the group and all members are encouraged to attend regularly.

## **12. Date of next meeting**

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May

**Mina McPhee**

**23 April 2021**